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The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
KATHLEEN BLISS

19*th September*, 1945

DEAR MEMBER,

As summer leads into autumn continued reports from the Continent, of bad harvests and fuel shortage, make it clear that a terrible winter lies ahead. To undo the damage done by war to land, stock, and agricultural equipment will take years.

In Germany the victors have to fulfil the role of administrators in incredibly difficult circumstances. R. H. S. Crossman, writing in *The New Statesman*, points out that failure to ward off famine will not only bring suffering to the German people, but may undermine the morale of our occupying forces to a dangerous degree. Men who have to police a starving population either become ruthlessly indifferent to the sufferings even of little children, or (and this is the more likely development among British soldiers) they will give their own food away and swing towards a sentimental pro-Germanism and a cynical criticism of the administration which could not avert disease.

Pouring into Germany from the East are hordes of Germans expelled from their homes, wandering and starving on the roads. A cable from Geneva says that the Churches are trying to help, but are overwhelmed. There are all over Europe pockets of acute suffering and distress, hospitals where wounded Russian soldiers and German nurses exist in most primitive conditions; there are 500,000 German prisoners and internees in France, including women, children and boys of fourteen, for whom the French Government cannot obtain supplies of food, and of whom very many are likely to perish this winter. The tale of suffering seems unending, and it is easy to turn away with a sick heart and to say that since misery and death are inevitable, it is better not to allow one's mind to dwell on them.

It is good to be reminded by a reader of the News-Letter of a phrase used by Reinhold Niebuhr, "the works of the *hidden* Christ." The misery is not all. If Christ rules, then beneath the surface the forces of good are always at work. It is the fact that we believe these deep tides to be flowing all the time that gives significance to every act of pity and mercy and makes the smallest of them worth while.

CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION IN EUROPE

We asked the Rev. Ronald Allen, secretary of the British Committee for Christian Reconstruction in Europe, to let us have the latest information about the efforts being made to maintain and strengthen the Christian forces in Europe. He writes as follows :—

"The work of bringing swift and appropriate aid to the Christian forces in Europe is proceeding on the basis of plans prepared for the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches by Dr. Visser 't Hooft in September, 1942. These were summarized by Dr. William Paton in a Supplement to the News-Letter (No. 176). Various types of need were envisaged which have since become abundantly apparent. The spirit in which help should be given was described as "unselfish and unconditional sharing between those who acknowledge each other as members of one and the same body." All Churches which can help will have to come to the aid of all Churches which need help.

A Reconstruction Department of the World Council of Churches has been set up and is vigorously at work under the chairmanship of Dr. Alphons Koechlin. Dr. Hutchison Cockburn, ex-moderator of the Church of Scotland, is chief of its secretariat which includes Swiss, German and American members of staff. Its main tasks are to undertake a detailed survey of needs, to make these known to the Churches able to help, and to formulate such projects of aid as need the united help of several Churches. Reconstruction Committees have been set up in as many countries as possible, both giving and receiving, so that all may co-operate through the World Council of Churches.

As the result of contact made with many European countries, by questionnaire and by the personal visits of the staff, the Department now has pretty accurate and up-to-date knowledge of the needs of the Protestant, Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches in Finland, Norway, Holland, Belgium, France, Italy, Czechoslovakia and Greece. Information is coming through from Poland and, to a small degree, from Hungary and the other Balkan countries. Contact is being established with leaders of the German Churches.

The Roman Catholic Church has its own machinery for giving aid, and co-operation at necessary points is taking place. Catholics and Protestants are sharing the same premises in some devastated areas of Germany.

The overall picture is both grim and hopeful. Many Churches through their share in the national resistance have the confidence of the new Governments and report growing support among sections of the community long indifferent or hostile to them. The Churches share everywhere in the general dislocation of life in Europe, the shortage of food and clothing, the breakdown of transport, the lack

of houses and the ruin of buildings. In addition, they have peculiar difficulties of their own. Many of the clergy and lay workers are worn out with hunger and other privations, or have suffered long terms of imprisonment for their share in the resistance movements ; many parishes are without clergy, especially in Germany.

There is a complete famine of Bibles and Christian literature of all kinds. What makes this the more heart-rending is that from many parts of Europe come reports of doors wide open for new opportunities. There is an eagerness to study the Bible, which cannot be satisfied because not even portions of the New Testament are available. There are endless calls for pastoral aid which go unmet because of lack of bicycles or motor cars to enable the clergy to visit their flocks. In Greece, even stoles are worn out and cassocks are in rags. The immense task of redirecting the energies of the children and youth of the resistance movements into constructive channels and orderly civil life demands the reopening of schools and the provision of equipment. There is a great unsatisfied hunger for news of the part played during the war by British and American Churches, and for the books written by the theologians of the free world.

These needs are now beginning to be met, mainly from the United States, Sweden and Switzerland. By way of example, Switzerland, Sweden and the U.S.A. have jointly provided fifteen temporary wooden churches for use in France. Twenty-two wooden halls are being made ready for Holland and Belgium. America has helped C.I.M.A.D.E., the French Protestant Youth Movement, with funds, buildings and volunteer workers. Switzerland has provided a number of motor cars for the use of the Dutch church and helped with literature for German pastors who are prisoners of war in France. U.N.R.R.A., at the request of the Greek Regent, is this month supplying 15,500 yards of black-out cloth for robes for the Greek clergy. From Britain the principal help so far given has been the despatch of six libraries, each of fifty English theological books published during the war. The first of these was presented personally to the Metropolitan Nikolai at Lambeth Palace. But the way is now open for British aid to begin to flow freely.

News-Letter readers will know that the British Committee for Christian Reconstruction in Europe works under the auspices of the British Council of Churches and has been in active operation with a whole-time staff for just over a year. The Committee set itself the task of raising a million pounds, half of it from the various denominations and the other half from the interdenominational societies and the general public. The Churches have raised £125,000 of new money, mainly as a result of the nation-wide collections taken on VE-Day. Of this £125,000 about £10,000 is ear-marked for particular countries or Churches. The interdenominational

societies have collected about £250,000. £200,000 of this is money set aside by the British and Foreign Bible Society, for European reconstruction.

From the beginning the Committee has received friendly co-operation from the Government, especially the Foreign Office, but it is only in the last month that Treasury control has been relaxed to allow the sending of money to the liberated countries. Even now this is limited to Western Europe, though the way to help other countries may be expected to open shortly.

At the request of the Reconstruction Department of the World Council Churches the Committee has, therefore, made the following allocations: France, £5,000 for Protestant Churches; Finland, £4,000 for Lutherans, £1,000 for the Orthodox Churches; Holland, £14,000 for Reformed Churches, £1,000 for Old Catholics; Belgium, £5,000 for Protestant Churches; Greece, £20,000. Funds are being reserved to help the German and other Churches as the way opens.

One possible future development, dear to the heart of the Committee, has so far proved impossible because of visa difficulties. That is the bringing to Great Britain of pastors and their families, layworkers and theological students, for physical recuperation, and for visits to British parishes and theological colleges.

With regard to finance, the Reconstruction Department of the World Council of Churches suggests two main objectives. First, a short and middle-term policy covering the next five years and including the quick repair of buildings, the provision of temporary buildings in blitzed areas, and the restarting of parochial life in all its various activities; and secondly, a long term policy covering the years 1950–60, which would probably include a large increase in the capital of the International Christian Loan Association (A.P.I.D.E.P.) which was brought into being after the last war. Such loans would help more permanent projects. This policy has not yet been considered by the British Committee, but meanwhile it is good to know that many Church of England Dioceses and several of the Free Churches are including assistance for Europe in their general post-war reconstruction appeals.

There are several ways in which readers of the Christian News-Letter could render immediate help. These include gifts of Bibles in Greek, Hebrew or any European language, of the great religious classics and of good theological books published during the war. Also, gifts of communion plate. Several such gifts have already been received at the Committee's offices and forwarded to the Continent. Bicycles and bicycle tyres in good condition will meet a great need in Holland. Gramophone records of religious music have also been asked for.[1]

[1] Gifts in kind may be offered to the Secretary, Christian Reconstruction in Europe, 21 Bloomsbury Street, W.C. 1, who will give information as to where they should be sent.

Finally, there is a need for an endless stream of gifts of money, large and small, including gifts under Deed of Covenant, until the million pound target is reached and passed. For what is even a million pounds for Christian Reconstruction against the desolation and devastation of Europe?

THE CHURCH IN HOLLAND

Encouraging reports reach us about the Churches in Holland. Holland has suffered cruelly in the war, and the Churches share in the grim struggle of the nation to repair the devastation and to overcome the scarcity of supplies. The Dutch Reformed Church, which is the largest of the Protestant bodies, has taken the initiative in setting up over a considerable part of Holland, in co-operation with other Protestant Churches and with the Roman Catholics, centres for the distribution of food brought in by the farmers and entrusted by them to an organization in the fairness and efficiency of which they have confidence. There is evidence that the Church has gained a new place in the regard of the people through its courageous resistance to the oppressor, and that its experiences during the war have inspired it with a new energy and vision.

Plans are being made to establish a new institute for training both clergy and lay men and women for more effective witness and service in the various spheres of secular life, such as industry, agriculture and education.

GREECE

A letter from one of our members who has visited Greece tells us of a "Christian Social Circle" formed by Professor Bratsiotis, who was one of the delegates of the Greek Orthodox Church at the Oxford Conference in 1937. Its membership consists chiefly of laymen, and its object is to discover "what Christianity gives for the understanding and amelioration of society." It includes five theologians, four professors of economics, three doctors, three bankers, three big industrialists (textiles and iron), two professors of natural science, a judge of the supreme court and several jurists (chiefly administrative).

The group was formed during the occupation and met privately. It is based on the understanding that the members meet for free and frank discussion of the relation of the Christian faith to social and political questions, and a remarkable spirit of harmony and toleration prevails. The Circle is at present meeting once a week in the senate room of the University.

The same correspondent, who has travelled as widely as the inadequate means of getting about permit, says that the shortage of materials can hardly be imagined. Food supplies are more adequate, but very few can pay for them because there are no

materials with which to work to make a livelihood. Clothing is scanty. Wood for repairs is scarcely obtainable. Paper and ink are unknown ; the children in the schools write their letters in the sand or even describe them in the air! Railway tracks have been torn up and thrown into ravines. Many little towns have suffered bombardments and burning from Italians and Germans.

Yet the way in which some of these little communities have set about rebuilding their life among the ruins is profoundly moving. A town of 5,000 people suffered almost complete destruction. About half the people have now returned and are living in lean-to hovels erected against the few remaining walls. Their first act was to turn a damaged building into a centre from which food and other supplies could be distributed. Then they repaired and reopened their church and restarted their school in part of it. Now they are at work on a clinic, and only when this is done will they turn to making their own homes. From many small towns come reports that the Church is a rallying-point for a new community life.

A NEW SEASON OF DRAMA

The Christian News-Letter Supplement on Religious Drama (No. 208) provoked considerable interest among our readers. On September 13th a season of religious drama opened at the Mercury Theatre, Notting Hill Gate, renewing a tradition of pre-war years, for it was at this theatre that T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* ran for a year. A number of younger poets have during the war turned to play-writing. They are now provided with a stage. All the plays have religious themes. The first play, *The Old Man of the Mountains*, by Norman Nicholson, tells the story of Elijah in the setting of modern Cumberland. *This Way to the Tomb*, to be produced in October, is a play in the form of masque and anti-masque by Robert Duncan, with music by Benjamin Britten. In the Christmas play Ann Ridler sets the nativity story in a modern factory. Other plays will follow. The Pilgrim Players and their director, Mr. Martin Browne, are making a venture of faith to which many Christian people will give active sympathy and support. All these poets have something to say which is worth hearing, and if they can capture the public imagination we may see some great dramatic writing in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Bliss

P.S. We are frequently asked whether we still need used C.N-L. envelopes. They are very welcome.

THE HUMAN SITUATION IN EUROPE

By HENRY CARTER

I have recently undertaken a journey of inquiry into conditions prevailing in Europe, more especially among stateless and destitute persons. The journey was sponsored by the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees.

Switzerland is both the best and the worst base from which to conduct such an inquiry. From it there radiate into Europe all the well-used lines of investigation, communication and service, preserved by the Swiss nation throughout the war. Tens of thousands of refugees have been for longer or shorter periods the recipients of Swiss hospitality. Yet the immunity of Switzerland from the ravages of war, and the fact that the administration of the great philanthropic organizations goes on in stately buildings, may tend to make one forget the misery beyond its frontiers.

It may be useful to indicate the broad distinction between the responsibilities of I.G.C. and those of U.N.R.R.A. U.N.R.R.A., with Governor Lehman as Director-General, is charged to deal with the huge emergency tasks of relief and rehabilitation ; in the words of the late President Roosevelt, its work is " to help the people of the liberated areas meet those essential needs which they cannot provide for themselves." Its operations are subject to the consent of Allied military authority, or of the national authority in a country where self-government has been restored. Within certain limits U.N.R.R.A. is also empowered to work in enemy or ex-enemy countries.

The Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, on the other hand, with Sir Herbert Emerson as Director, has the long-term responsibility of grappling with the more permanent elements of the human tragedy, particularly with the multitude of " stateless " persons adrift in Europe, and with the Jews who evaded the Nazi terror ; it seeks to find new homes and new citizenship for individuals and families in these pitiful circumstances. It was set up by the Evian Conference in 1938 and its mandate was renewed and extended by the Bermuda Conference of 1943.

I was able to confer with European representatives of I.G.C., heads of relevant departments of the Swiss Government, officers of the World Council of Churches recently returned from distant journeyings, leaders of Swiss Jewry, directors of the International Red Cross, and with persons who had maintained underground contacts with resisters to Nazism. I visited refugee workshops and camps, and attended a singularly interesting conference at Davos composed of refugee-delegates elected by their fellows, who added

distinctive points of view to information which might otherwise have been too markedly official.

The sessions of U.N.R.R.A. in London in August focussed public attention on the human problem of post-war Europe. A mass of human misery unprecedented in magnitude and intensity confronts us. Food, fuel, clothing, shelter, raw materials, remunerative employment are all in grievously short supply. Total war has achieved almost total wreckage of an ordered life. The one noteworthy exception relates to the rural population; where land has not been blasted by war the peasantry have the soil and their own labour by which to live.

At the present low level of subsistence in regions of central and eastern Europe it is almost a farce to talk of culture, yet it must be noted as another fact pregnant with evil that in extensive areas scarcely a single school, properly staffed and equipped, is open. Wide breaches in social morality are known to all observers —looting to get the necessaries of life, sexual promiscuity with increase of venereal disease, violence. Unless effort, on a scale adequate to the need, is made to save the threatened parts of the Continent from collapse, the infected areas of Europe may infect the world—physically, mentally, morally.

It is to the point to indicate how post-war treatment of Germans and Germany has a direct bearing on the European future. The industrial question is one of fundamental importance. Strong feeling against Nazi Germany must not obscure the fact that Germany has been the pivot of European industrial economy. Now the industrial Reich lies in ruins, and an influential section of world opinion is strongly opposed to any revival of its heavy trades even to serve peaceable ends. The effect of such a policy, involving continuous impoverishment of Germany, could not be limited to that country. No continental nation could swiftly render the industrial and commercial services that Germany supplied before the war to Europe. We do not yet know whether it is purposed that continental Europe should be tributary, in an economic sense, to non-European industrial interests, and the hope of peace, as of prosperity, depends largely upon an answer yet to be given.

THE TWO POPULATIONS

Broadly speaking, two populations are spread over the ravaged territories—those who belong there, and those who are adrift. Not less than ten million men and women were brought from their homelands by the Nazis for forced labour in factories and on the land. Add the multitudes in flight before invading armies, the miserable dwellers in concentration camps, and the evacuees from heavily-bombed cities, and the total may surpass twenty millions. This figure takes no note of prisoners of war,

First let us recall what existence is like for millions in Europe who before the war shared with us the familiar amenities of city life—the population which "belongs." Accounts agree that the survivors of air and land war, and the returning exiles, clung tenaciously to the ruins that were once their homes. Under the wreckage of some burnt-out streets the dead still lie. In city after city the public utilities—water, sanitation, gas, electricity—overwhelmed by aerial bombardment, are, if at all, only partially restored. Local shortages of food are due in part to destruction of roads, railways and transport. There are, of course, some better areas and the movement of population is towards these. Food is strictly rationed where the Allied Control [1] is effective; food for the resident German population is on a subsistence level. Beds, bedding and necessary furniture are often wanting in the shattered towns. Medicinal requirements are inadequate. Medical staffs, military and civilian, wage a war yet unwon against typhus, dysentery, tuberculosis, diseases of insanitation and malnutrition. Official and parental care for children cannot adequately safeguard their health in conditions of semi-chaos. The dispersion of families is a cause of general anxiety. In many rural areas there is insufficiency of seeds, fertilizers, livestock and agricultural machinery—a bad outlook for next year's harvest, with grim results for the city dweller, unless U.N.R.R.A. can replenish stocks swiftly.

The dominating concern is how to get daily bread, and shelter and warmth when winter comes. Yet as local administration is entrusted more and more to local leadership, as the wheels of industry begin to turn again however slowly, as religious and non-Nazi political groups draw together, minds will be recharged with ideas and purposes. A searching test lies ahead, for governors and governed.

What of the other population, the millions severed from their homelands, the "Displaced Persons"?

Any one of the camps set up at numerous points will reveal how heterogeneous is this vast company. There is the remnant of persecuted Jewry, emerging from hiding or imprisonment. There are German Balts, Silesians and Sudetens, industrious folk for the most part, the vanguard of millions threatened with expulsion and homelessness either because of racial origin or proposed transfers of territory to Russia or Poland. There are Poles, Hungarians and other nationals who have no wish to return to their fatherlands under new political conditions. There are technicians and factory workers from various countries who came to the Reich more or less willingly, attracted by offers of work and good wage, and are now desperately anxious not to be forced to go home to face hostility

[1] For an account of administration in Germany in the first few months of Allied occupation see *The World To-day*, August 1945, Royal Institute of International Affairs.

or outlawry. There are " broken people," the flotsam and jetsam of the years of conflict. Saddest of all is youth uprooted from home and school and industry; an investigator just returned from Upper Austria told me of the fear in a farming district caused by hooligans in their 'teens, who lived by looting and made their headquarters in abandoned railway trucks.

First steps have been taken to bring the younger children released from concentration camps to this country, Switzerland or Sweden for medical care and for training. Three hundred reached Britain in August.

Repatriation has been in progress for some months, and has advanced far enough to reveal factors yet to be overcome. There is the difficulty of finding living-room and means of livelihood for many " repatriates " in their own partially destroyed home-towns; it is easy to imagine the resultant tensions. There is " the hard core of irrepatriables " just mentioned, whose future cannot be foreseen. There is the terrific problem of the mass populations in East Prussia to be divided between Russia and Poland, in German Silesia which Poland expects to annex, and in Sudetenland from which the Czechs propose to expel most Germans; if these twelve millions or more are to be compelled to live in a diminished Reich whose industrial economy is broken, it is certain that the world has not heard the last demand for *Lebensraum*.

Central to all is the problem of Jewry. On the Jews fell the first and the bitterest blows of persecution. Those who survive are a mere fraction of the Jewry of central and eastern Europe which, only six years ago, was a veritable stronghold of Hebraism. It is clear that the breadth and depth of the tragedy which has befallen Jews in Europe has intensified an eagerness to share in the building of a National Home in Palestine. It would be toying with one of the most serious issues confronting the world to-day to attempt to discuss it in brief sentences. The problem of Jewry is set before the conscience of mankind, and must be held there till right solutions are found.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

What can be done *quickly* to lessen the evils which afflict Europe will count twice in remedial value. The mischief left to fester will erupt in worse maladies. What can be done falls under three heads—material relief and re-equipment, intellectual co-operation, moral and spiritual obligation.

Material Relief and Re-equipment

U.N.R.R.A. received its mandate from the United Nations at Atlantic City in November, 1943. Its establishment to bring relief and to aid rehabilitation set limits to what voluntary organizations were free to attempt; yet in one way or another—through

U.N.R.R.A. or at the request of national or military authorities—the Quakers and other voluntary bodies have shouldered heavy responsibilities on the Continent, especially in camps for displaced persons. Debates about whether or not U.N.R.R.A. moved too slowly, or accepted too readily restrictions on its mandate must be set aside. "If U.N.R.R.A. fails," said Mr. Philip Noel Baker at its third Council meeting last month, "there will be famine, disease, anarchy and bloodshed . . . U.N.R.R.A. must not, shall not fail." What matters now is action, speedy, continuous, and as adequate as the world's resources permit.

But personal and public responsibility cannot be separated by fixing the burden on official shoulders only. The pace of Government action in the helping countries will be related to the state of public opinion, which can help Governments to shun mere national self-interest in face of European distress. Let us resolve to sustain a five-fold programme for the coming winter :—

(1) Further Governmental money grants to enable U.N.R.R.A. to purchase essential supplies, even though this may limit remissions of war-taxation in Britain ;
(2) willing acceptance of stringent rationing of food, fuel and clothing so that the maximum amount may go to Europe ;
(3) avoidance of waste of food by authorities and by each of us ;
(4) inclusion of all necessitous populations in the scheme of relief and rehabilitation, for plague knows no frontiers and widespread starvation can re-kindle strife anywhere ;
(5) a claim on U.N.R.R.A., the Press and the Governments that the public be kept informed of the realities of the situation.

Intellectual Co-operation

A graphic picture of the overthrow or perversion of educational systems in the occupied countries by their Nazi rulers is presented in a forthcoming official pamphlet.[1] This publication describes in factual terms the deliberate destruction in Poland and Yugoslavia of the structure of education, and the persistent and tyrannous effort to make education subserve the Nazi aim in other occupied countries.

Side by side with the educational problems of the liberated countries is the much-discussed problem of the re-education of the youth of the Reich. I was frequently reminded by anti-Nazi Germans exiled in Switzerland that the process of mis-education on the Nazi model dates back twelve years, to Hitler's seizure of power in 1933. The whole period of school life for the generation

[1] By United Nations Information Organization for the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education.

of German youth now in the later 'teens was spent in that deforming environment, in school or compulsory military or manual duty. Only a free Germany, within and beyond the Reich, can provide the answer to this intellectual and moral problem. Re-education of Germans organized and attempted by Germany's conquerors would meet much the same fate as did the Nazi's scheme in the territories they temporarily occupied.

The forthcoming pamphlet suggests among other practical aids to recovery the restitution or gift of literary and other equipment for schools, universities and research institutions; the training of personnel; exchange of teachers; improvement in educational methods, including "the production of history textbooks of an objective character." It is not yet widely known that within the new world-structure fashioned at San Francisco a "United Nations Organization for Educational and Cultural Reconstruction" is in formation. This is largely due to the initiative of Mr. R. A. Butler, our former Minister of Education, who describes its objects in the following terms:—

"There must be no attempt to impose a uniform cultural pattern upon our national diversities. But there is great need of an international clearing-house of educational and cultural information and ideas. This is the kind of co-operation which will assist us to discover a common allegiance, and lead us to a wider and more constructive international outlook."

Moral and Spiritual Obligation

The root cause of the shattering of European civilization was the growing disregard of Christian values, culminating in their specific rejection by an authoritarian government. Hitler's merciless attack on the Jews sprang from discernment as well as dislike; for Jewry, despite all its wanderings, nurtured belief in God as One to whom man owed allegiance.

The tyranny of dictatorships can be challenged on the battlefield; it can only be vanquished by the active acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God. It is through sincere quest of his will, by obedience to him and in steadfast committal of ourselves to works of Christian compassion that the wounds of Europe may be healed.

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